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ABSTRACT

This paper documents the evaluation use process among districts using the Guide for Evaluation Decision Makers, published by the Center for the Study of Evaluation (CSE) during the 1984-85 school year. Included are the following: (1) a discussion of research that led to conclusions concerning the administrator's role in evaluation use; (2) a characterization of project objectives and how they grew out of research findings; (3) a description of the process of locating and selecting districts to implement the guide; (4) a description of each evaluation context (the use-affecting factors which emerged at each site, the application of the guide by administrators to promote use, success in applying the intended evaluation uses); (5) a discussion of implementation issues; (6) a synthesis of the results across sites; and (7) suggested implications for future practice. Appendices include a factor pattern for evaluation use, worksheets, organizing strategies from the guide, a letter of invitation and a project description, and questionnaires for evaluation. (LMO)

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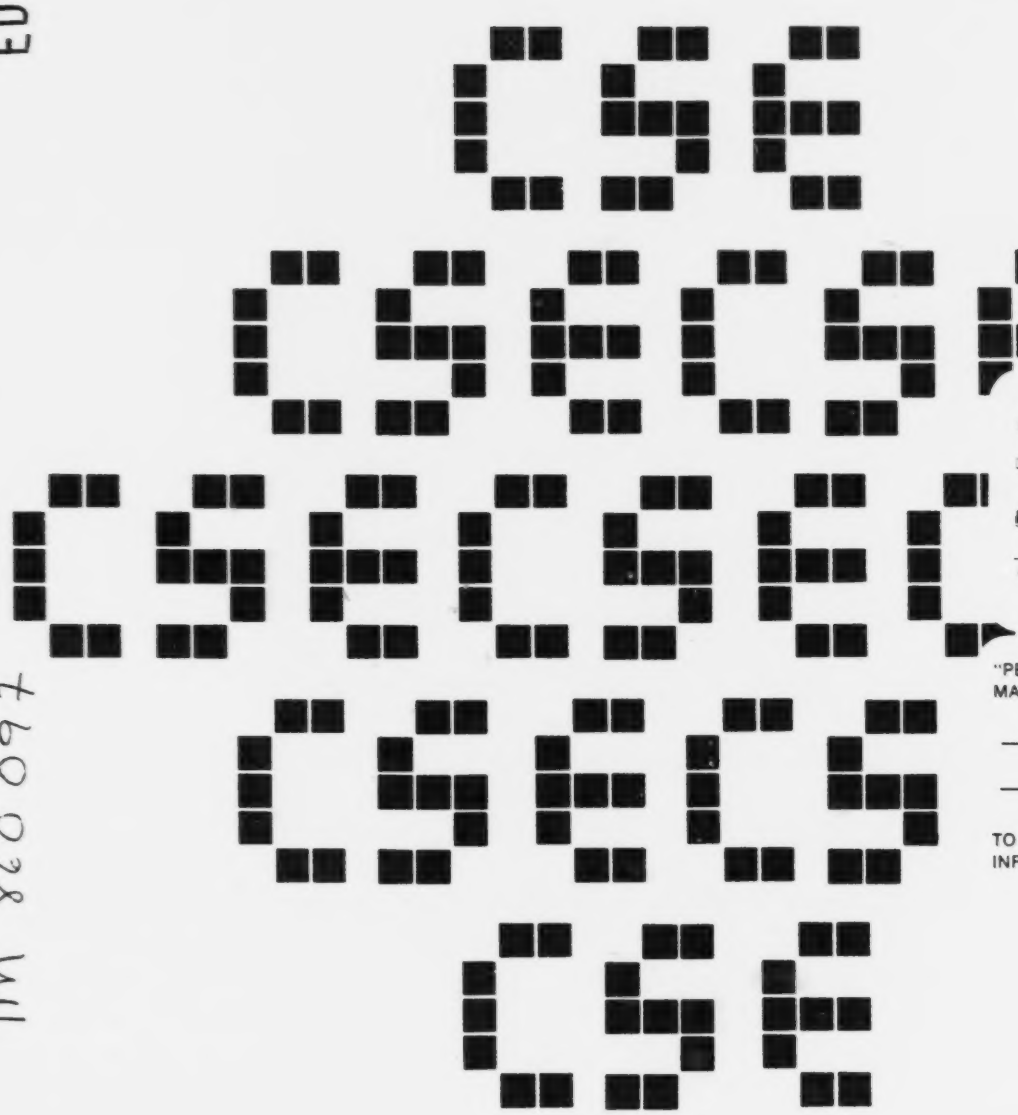
EVALUATION PRODUCTIVITY PROJECT

Documenting Evaluation Use: Guided Evaluation Decisionmaking

Project Director
Marvin C. Alkin



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Center for the Study of Evaluation
Graduate School of Education
University of California, Los Angeles

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Documenting Evaluation Use:
Guided Evaluation Decisionmaking

Report Prepared By
James Burry

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Introduction

During the 1984-85 school year, selected districts throughout the country have been applying our framework for evaluation use to increase the utilization of their program evaluations. In this endeavor, district administrators have been applying the organizing framework and use-promoting procedures contained in our Guide for Evaluation Decision Makers (Alkin et al, 1985).

The Guide, which characterizes the factors our research identified as affecting evaluation use, acts upon the premise that if evaluations are to have a potential for use, they need to be organized around the factors known to affect use.

In this regard, our research found that it is often possible to influence these factors in the interest of use. Many of these factors, however, are not particularly amenable to evaluator influence. Rather, they are often part of an administrators's domain of responsibility, and therefore more amenable to administrator influence.

Given the strength of this finding, and because much of the emphasis on evaluation improvement focuses on evaluator responsibilities, we set out to develop a tool which would improve practice by assisting administrators to organize evaluations for use. The Guide we developed to meet this need discusses the administrator's organizing role and offers procedures for promoting and monitoring the use process.

This paper documents the use process among our participant districts and demonstrates the successes they achieved. First, we discuss the research that led to our conclusions concerning the administrator's role in

evaluation use. Second, we characterize the objectives of the project and how they grew out of our research findings. Third, we describe the process of locating and selecting districts to implement the Guide. Fourth, we describe each evaluation context, the use-affecting factors which emerged at each site, how administrators applied the Guide to promote use, and how well the intended evaluation uses were achieved. Fifth, we discuss some implementation issues. Finally, we synthesize the results across sites and suggest implications for future practice.

CSE Research on Evaluation Use

Our research on evaluation use shows clearly that the more active an administrator's participation in program evaluation, the more likely it is that the evaluation findings will be put to use. Given the strength of this finding, we developed an organizing framework to help administrators take the leadership role necessary to enhance their program evaluations' use potential. The framework takes the position that evaluation is a means of producing information which can be used to make decisions about programs: about how the program can be improved, about how resources might be allocated, about how attitudes toward the program can be changed.

Now, the people who will be asked to use evaluation information for the above and other decision areas are likely to differ in their disposition to apply information. In fact, predisposition toward evaluation is one of the many elements known to influence use, elements inherent not only in the conduct of the evaluation itself but also in its social, political, organizational, administrative, and programmatic

context. If these elements are ignored, they can reduce or negate the evaluation's use potential.

If, on the other hand, an evaluation is considered in light of the range of elements known to affect use -- and if it is organized, planned, conducted, and communicated in response to the particular elements operating in a given setting -- its use potential increases.

As we mentioned previously, we believe that a program administrator, rather than a program evaluator, is frequently in the strongest strategic position to assume the evaluation organizing responsibility.

In large measure, our research on evaluation use over the past decade was motivated by the grandiose claims made by some of the early advocates of evaluation. According to them, evaluation would have a significant and highly visible impact on the program being evaluated. All the evaluator had to do was to provide valid data and educators would use them in their decision-making which would result in dramatic improvements in educational policy and practice. Such direct and immediate use is rare.

However, we have discovered over the years that although information may not be put to immediate and observable use, that should not be taken to suggest that no use is taking place. Rather, an evaluation's impact is frequently long-range, cumulative, and more modest than originally expected (Alkin et al., 1974). Further, other kinds of information, in addition to evaluation, often contribute to a particular decision.

In addition, the early proponents of evaluation frequently placed too much emphasis on the technical aspects of evaluation. Once again, our research offers a different perspective. That is, neither the procedural soundness of an evaluation nor the validity of its data are sufficient to

ensure use. For example, one early CSE study (Alkin, 1975) showed that the evaluator's stance toward the program, its staff, and their questions can affect use. Other early research (Patton et al., 1978) also pointed up the importance of the "personal factor."

Among the early evaluation researchers, further, the evaluator's responsibility for evaluation and its use was overplayed. Our research, however, indicated that the potential user of information, such as an administrator, also carries some responsibility. The evaluator often lacks the power, prestige, understanding, and political sensitivity necessary to promote use. The influence of an administrator is often required.

Drawing on the early studies mentioned above, CSE launched a series of empirical studies of evaluation use. They included evaluation case studies, an evaluator field study, and a user survey. The findings from these studies prompted us to review the literature on evaluation use, which contributed to our development of the Guide for evaluation decision-makers. The major points of each of these studies -- their contributions to our knowledge of the evaluation use process -- are summarized below.

The Evaluation Case Studies

Our case studies (Alkin, Daillak, & White, 1979) focused, over a period of two years, on five Title I or Title IVC programs. These studies involved in-depth interviews with program staff and the evaluator, and the examination of documents such as program proposals and evaluation reports.

The case studies described in detail school-level program evaluation: how the evaluation process unfolded and who helped shape the process, how evaluation was used, how it fitted in with other school operations, and how it influenced decisions about the program. By identifying the factors that

influenced the evaluation process, we developed a conceptional framework to guide our future study of use. This early framework identified the evaluation's constraints, the evaluator's approach to the program, the user's disposition toward evaluation, the organizational setting, and the administrator's leadership as influencing the use process.

The Evaluator Field Study

The case studies showed that evaluation information is more likely to be used at the local level when evaluators adapt their approach to the needs of program managers. The field study was therefore conducted to examine the evaluation process from the standpoint of evaluators themselves. Daillak (1980) spent a year in an urban school system, working closely with three district staff evaluators. By directly observing these three evaluators at work, and by discussing with them the evaluation process as it unfolded, Daillak illuminated some of the elements posited in the original version of the conceptual framework, especially those elements related to evaluator approach, and how he or she communicates information in light of the evaluation's organizational setting.

With respect to approach, for instance, Daillak observed the importance of the evaluator's providing advice and guidance to program staff rather than merely collecting and analyzing data. In terms of information communication, he found that the informal sharing of ideas and recommendations tended to increase evaluation use. With respect to the organizational setting, Daillak found that, regardless of the approach taken by the evaluator, certain organizational constraints -- such as loose management of instruction or negative attitudes toward evaluation -- may pose obstacles to program evaluation and information use.

The User Survey

The user survey (Stecher, Alkin, & Flesher, 1981), conducted in the same district as the evaluator field study, was intended to shed light on the evaluation process as seen by users: how they view the program and its evaluation, how evaluation information is used and by whom, how much it is used, for what purposes, and under what social/institutional/political conditions. Over the course of a year, the principal, the program coordinator, and another staff administrator at each of 22 schools were interviewed about their perceptions of significant program occurrences over the year and about the extent to which evaluation had contributed to these occurrences.

The interviews suggested that influences beyond evaluation, such as personal belief and opinion, affect the decisionmaking process. Further, while evaluation may play a modest role in the final decision, its impact is strongly felt in the earlier stages of the decisionmaking process, such as needs assessment and problem recognition. Finally, evaluation use increases to the extent that administrators adopt the tactic of involving other potential users, such as teachers, in the decisionmaking process.

Review of the Literature on Evaluation Use

At this stage, we had fleshed out our framework for evaluation use. We had a fairly clear picture of the general conditions of evaluation use, and had identified many specific elements -- such as evaluator role, user interest, the evaluation requirements, and the substance of the evaluation information -- that have a bearing on use in most settings.

We conducted a review of the evaluation use literature (Burry, 1983), to judge the extent to which our findings might be shared by others. The

review identified and examined some 150 studies dealing specifically with evaluation use: in education, public health, human services, and criminal justice. These studies, empirical as well as conceptual or theoretical, confirmed the existence and importance of each of the elements identified earlier. They also made it clear, just as we had found in our work, that evaluation use is strongly influenced by the actions of administrators: identifying the intended information users, translating their interests into evaluation questions, discussing these and other requirements with the evaluator, making sure that the evaluation addresses both program-focused and other issues, and making sure that the answers are communicated in ways appropriate to the intended users.

The Guide for Evaluation Decision-makers

In view of the importance of administrator-evaluator collaboration in mapping out the evaluation's focus and procedures, we developed our Guide for administrators seeking to organize their evaluations for maximal usefulness (Alkin et al., 1985). The Guide exemplifies the personal, organizational, and procedural characteristics known to affect use. Of major importance to the administrator-organizer are scenarios which offer a bridge between the research findings and their administrative application. These scenarios, a series of evolving vignettes, show an administrator working closely with an evaluator to build local uses into the evaluation.

The organizing framework presented in the Guide demonstrates how the elements affecting use fall into patterns which reflect stages of the use process and how the administrator can influence these elements to promote use.

Over the last decade, then, our research on evaluation use has evolved from investigation of the general conditions of use to analysis of specific cases. In this evolution, we have moved from an understanding of the broad domain of use, to consideration and verification of the discrete elements that make up that domain, to illumination of how these elements influence the use process, and finally to demonstration of the kinds of administrator action which promote evaluation use.

Figure 1, which is excerpted from the Guide, shows that the principal characteristics influencing use fall into three categories: the participants in the evaluation, the setting of the evaluation, and the conduct of the evaluation. The first category comprises evaluator characteristics and user characteristics; the second, preexisting evaluation bounds, organizational features, and program characteristics; and the third, evaluation procedures, information dialogue, substance of the evaluation, and reporting of the evaluation. Each of the elements listed in the figure has a demonstrated relevance to evaluation use.

Figure 1: The Domain of Evaluation Use

I. The Participants in the Evaluation

A. Evaluator Characteristics
   1. commitment to use
   2. willingness to involve users
   3. choice of role
   4. rapport with users
   5. political sensitivity
   6. credibility

B. User Characteristics
   1. identity
      a. range of potential users
      b. organizational positions
      c. professional experience levels
   2. interest in the evaluation
      a. views about the project being evaluated
      b. expectations for the evaluation
      c. predisposition toward the evaluation
      d. perceived need
      e. perceived risks
   3. commitment to use
   4. professional style
      a. administrative and organizational skills
      b. initiative
      c. openness to new ideas or change
   5. information processing
      a. preference for particular forms
      b. how information is processed

II. The Setting of the Evaluation

A. Pre-existing Evaluation Bounds
   1. written requirements
   2. other contractual obligations
   3. fiscal constraints

B. Organizational Features
   1. intraorganizational
      a. role of central/district office
      b. interrelationship between unit and central/district administration
      c. institutional arrangements
      d. unit level autonomy
      e. sources of information beyond evaluation likely to be in use
      f. perceived institutional risk
   2. external
      a. community climate
      b. community influence
      c. role of other agencies

C. Project Characteristics
   1. age/maturity
   2. innovativeness
   3. overlap with other projects

III. The Conduct of the Evaluation

A. Evaluation Procedures
   1. methods used
      a. appropriateness
      b. rigor
   2. dealing with mandated tasks
   3. use of a general model

B. Information Dialogue

1. amount and quality of interaction between evaluator and users

C. Substance of Evaluation Information

1. information relevance
2. information specificity

D. Evaluation Reporting

1. frequency of information provided
2. timing of information
3. format of presentations
   a. oral presentations
   b. written reports
   c. statistical and narrative data

Summary: How the Guide Distills the Research Findings

In this section we discuss how the Guide distills the relevant research for administrator application. A detailed synthesis of the evaluation-use research appears in Burry, Alkin, & Ruskus, 1985.

Evaluator characteristics affecting use: As Figure 1 shows, the evaluator characteristics affecting use are: commitment to use, willingness to involve users, choice of role, rapport with users, political sensitivity, and credibility. All these characteristics reflect the evaluator's approach to his or her craft, which has a profound influence on use.

For instance, when evaluators tangibly demonstrate their commitment to use and encourage others to follow suit, use is more likely to occur. For example, some evaluators attempt to stimulate use of findings by involving users in the evaluation itself. Some evaluators committed to use often successfully involve others in the evaluation by enlisting the support of an administrator, who then goes on to recruit others.

Evaluator commitment to use and willingness to involve others, then, often go hand in hand. But these qualities may have little effect if the evaluator does not adopt a role appropriate to the program being evaluated. In most cases, the most appropriate role seems to be a facilitative one, based on a recognition that the evaluation should serve the program rather than simply meeting the pro forma -- frequently external -- requirements.

The ability to assume a facilitative role depends on the extent to which the evaluator is willing to collaborate with potential users, to involve them in decisions about the evaluation, and then to ensure that

information gets to people who can act upon it.

An evaluator's ability to adopt a collaborative role may influence the extent to which he or she can develop rapport with users. And such rapport contributes greatly to use. Further, both rapport and use increase when the evaluator demonstrates an understanding of the internal and external political environment of the program. In our framework, this characteristic is termed "political sensitivity," the understanding that evaluation is only one part of the political context of any program.

The final evaluator characteristic contributing to use is credibility with the program staff. Credibility may stem from reputation, from the trust the evaluator enjoys with program staff and from their perception of how well he or she understands their program, or from forcefulness of personality.

As with any profession, evaluators differ in their approach to their craft. Some evaluators believe that technical soundness leads to information use. Others understand that their personal commitment to use is critical and that they must expend whatever effort is needed to promote use. Efforts to involve potential users in all facets of the evaluation process are especially likely to pay off.

These two characteristics -- commitment to use and willingness to involve others -- depend, in large part, on the role the evaluator chooses, and there are several from which to choose. Some evaluators view themselves as impartial judges; others equate evaluation with research and run the evaluation like an experiment; others act as advocates for the program being evaluated. The ideal role, however, is one in which the evaluator views the users as colleagues who help guide the evaluation to

ensure that their questions are built in and answered.

The evaluator who adopts the use-promoting stance suggested above takes an important step toward fostering the trust and harmony that underly rapport with users, a rapport that is further strengthened when the evaluator is sensitive to the program's political dynamics and understands that evaluation information is only one of many possible inputs to the decisionmaking process and that people with different attitudes, backgrounds, and power or prestige are likely to contribute to that process.

Finally, the evaluator who is a good craftsman and who displays the characteristics described above is establishing the credibility he or she needs if potential users are to believe that the information they receive is worth putting to use.

User characteristics affecting use: The user characteristics pertinent to use are: identity, interest in the evaluation, commitment to use, professional style, and information preferences and processing routines.

Most evaluations have a range of potential users; evaluation use tends to increase when these users are clearly specified and when their questions and needs are earmarked for the evaluator's attention. The use-conscious evaluator, however, should be aware that users, even those who belong to the same group, may have conflicting definitions of a common issue and that these conflicts must be resolved in the interest of use.

Other user characteristics included in identity are organizational position(s) and professional experience level(s). In this regard, use tends to increase when evaluation information is provided to someone who

occupies a position of power within the organization and who has sufficient experience to put the information to use.

User interest has several aspects: users' views about the program being evaluated, their expectations about the evaluation, their predisposition toward evaluation in general, their perceived needs, and their perceptions of the risks entailed in an evaluation. Successful evaluators are careful to determine how the various users view both the program and the evaluation and then act accordingly. For example, if users hold inflexible views about a program, if they expect the evaluation to produce information that supports their views, and if the evaluation generates findings that run counter to these views, then use is difficult to promote.

Users' general attitudes toward evaluation are also important: the more positive these attitudes, the more likely it is that the evaluation will be used. For instance, use increases when the potential users believe that evaluation produces useful information and is appropriate for their particular questions. However, when users believe that the evaluation entails a risk that outweighs its perceived benefits, use levels may diminish.

User commitment to use is just as important as evaluator commitment. For instance, when decisionmakers are tangibly and visibly committed to use, then use potential increases.

Users' professional styles constitute another important group of influences. In this regard, the administrator's ability to organize, initiate, and follow through on information-based action is related to use. Similarly, the extent to which management and evaluation functions

are integrated has a strong bearing on use. Further, administrators who are open to change, and who have the authority and initiative to apply the information at hand, have a positive influence on use.

Finally, users differ not only in their preferences for particular kinds of information but also in their preferences as to how this information is processed and presented to them. The extent to which evaluation information matches these preferences is a principal determinant of use.

Given that most evaluations have a range of potential users, it follows that various groups of users are likely to differ on the characteristics outlined above. Evaluators and administrators concerned with use must be aware of these differences and adapt their approach accordingly.

Users' views about the program, its evaluation, and evaluation in general may range from neutral to strongly positive or negative, and both the nature and the strength of these views can affect their tendency to use evaluation information. Generally, to the extent that users' specific needs for evaluation information outweigh the perceived risks involved in the evaluation, they will be inclined to put the information to use. Actual use, however, will depend on how well users can organize information and take responsibility for putting it to use, even if such use leads to changes in the program's content and operation.

Finally, no matter how strongly users are committed to applying evaluation information, use will also depend on the extent to which the information they receive comes to them in a form which they are comfortable.

Characteristics of the setting affecting use: The features of the setting that are pertinent to use include: preexisting evaluation bounds, organizational features, and program characteristics.

Evaluation bounds have three facets: written evaluation requirements, other contractual obligations, and fiscal constraints. Any potential conflicts (e.g., between the requirements imposed on an evaluation by an outside agency and the requirements emanating from the program itself) must be resolved if use is to occur; no single set of issues should be allowed to dominate. For example, use increases when the parties associated with different requirements agree in advance about the focus of the evaluation and the kinds of information it should produce. Negotiation between the evaluator and various users also contributes to the use process, as does discussion of the extent to which financial and personal resources earmarked for an evaluation are allocated to program concerns.

The organizational features affecting use are of two kinds: intraorganizational and external. With respect to intraorganizational features, the use potential tends to increase when a district office gives the evaluator some freedom in choosing a role and an evaluation focus. Equally important is the district's overall responsiveness to the needs of the local program. In particular, local program personnel must have autonomy to act upon the evaluation's findings. Allowing the evaluator freedom in role selection without offering comparable freedom at the site level to follow the evaluator's recommendations runs counter to the use process.

Just as individual users may perceive that an evaluation entails risks to a program, so the organization as a whole may perceive risk, and this

perception can impede use. In this regard, the more that users believe there is a risk to the institution, the more they should be involved in decisions that may affect the institution. Given the importance of this involvement to the use process, it is critical that overall institutional arrangements are such that user involvement is encouraged.

Among the external features that can have a bearing on use are school-community relations. Specifically, when the local community has a stake in the program being evaluated, and when it is asked to provide support, then the involvement of community members in the evaluation becomes important.

Finally, certain characteristics of the program itself -- including its age/maturity, its innovativeness, and its overlap with other programs -- have a bearing on evaluation use. For instance, newer and more innovative programs benefit more from formative than from summative evaluations. When programs overlap with other projects to form a programmatic whole, and when the whole is subject to evaluation, some attention should be given to the unique questions and information needs of each individual project.

To summarize the influence of the evaluation setting on use, the findings stress the need for information users and information providers to be sensitive to the contextual factors that affect information needs and use. For example, in any evaluation setting, the degree of tension or conflict between external evaluation requirements and the needs of the program itself can have a profound effect on use. Further, within the particular organization in which the evaluation is being conducted, overall institutional arrangements which minimize program-level autonomy can thwart

evaluation use at the program level. Institutional sense of risk, community involvement and expectations, the age and innovativeness of the program, and its relationship with other programs can also affect the extent to which the evaluation is put to use.

Evaluation characteristics affecting use: The final group of characteristics affecting evaluation use relate to the conduct of the evaluation itself. They are: the evaluation procedures, the information dialogue between evaluator and users, the substance of evaluation information, and evaluation reporting.

Evaluation procedures -- including the methods selected, the way in which mandated tasks are handled, and reliance on a general model -- can have a strong bearing on use. In particular, the methods selected should be appropriate to the given setting and should satisfy requirements for rigor. With respect to rigor and appropriateness, however, if the evaluator insists on adherence to strict research procedures, then he or she may damage the use potential. Conversely, when the procedures selected are sensitive to the purpose and scope of the programs' evaluation needs, the potential for use is enhanced.

Earlier, we pointed out that tension may exist among an evaluation's various requirements. If the evaluation emphasizes, or is perceived to emphasize, externally mandated requirements, then its potential usefulness decreases, at least in local eyes. On the other hand, if evaluations are designed, or are permitted the flexibility, to meet local needs, the potential for utilization increases.

An evaluation need not follow a formal model to enhance use. What is more important is that the evaluator select methods which are sensitive to

the organizational characteristics described earlier. This point is of particular importance to the use-conscious administrator given the tendency of some evaluators to espouse a particular evaluation model regardless of its appropriateness in a given setting.

The importance of evaluator-user dialogue cannot be over-stated. For instance, use tends to increase when the evaluator involves users in discussions of such specific evaluation concerns as how to read, analyze, and make decisions on the basis of evaluation information. Further, the earlier the evaluator and program staff meet to discuss possible evaluation uses the greater the liklihood that use will occur.

The substance of evaluation information provided, especially its relevance and specificity, is critical to use. Evaluation information which focuses on major program concerns is more likely to be used in decisionmaking, particularly when its recommendations are helpful. Further, important program decisions are typically based on a broad range of information needs, and use tends to increase when users are provided with information that they see as being specific to these needs.

The frequency and timing of evaluation reporting contribute to use. In this regard, while the effect of a final evaluation report is difficult to gauge, frequent and well-focused formative reports, especially when they mesh with the timing of program needs, increase the potential for use.

As for the format of reports and presentations, evaluation use increases when the evaluator selects a format which is appropriate to potential users and which gives clear answers to their questions. In this regard, informal presentations during the course of an evaluation are especially effective. Finally, graphic, narrative, and nontechnical modes

of presentation -- especially when they describe program strengths and weaknesses and make recommendations for improvement -- increase use.

With respect to the conduct of an evaluation, then, the research findings agree that the procedures used, the interaction between evaluator and users, the substance of the information, and the manner in which it is reported can have a marked influence on use.

Several themes emerge from the preceding discussion. First, the evaluator's ability to address questions relevant to the program is a key determinant of program-level use. The evaluator's success here depends, in part, on the various requirements imposed on the evaluation (by a funding agency, for example, or by the program itself) and on whether any particular set of requirements is allowed to dominate. If one set of needs, requirements, attitudes, or expectations takes precedence over other sets, causing the evaluator to adopt a certain role and collect certain kinds of information, and if the resulting evaluation runs counter to expectations at the program level, then potential users are likely to view the evaluator and his or her work with something less than enthusiasm.

Second, evaluation use also depends in large measure on users' interest in the program and its evaluation and on their commitment to applying its findings. This commitment is, in turn, affected by their levels of professional experience, their perceptions of individual and institutional risk, the program's context, and the program's relationship with similar programs or projects undergoing evaluation.

Third, even in those cases where the evaluation addresses the needs and concerns of program-level staff and where potential users are predisposed to apply its findings, certain procedural handicaps can offset

these advantages. For example, the evaluator may not have a clear idea of potential users' preferences as to information scheduling, format, and processing. Users may be reluctant to express their preferences to the evaluator, viewing such expression as unwarranted "turf encroachment," or they may falsely assume that an organizational superior will communicate their preferences to the evaluator.

These three points suggest a fourth: that many use-influencing elements are not amenable to the influence of the evaluator. Rather, they are more properly the responsibility of the administrator, who is in a better position than the evaluator to make sure that the evaluation addresses program-level needs, that potential users are committed to applying the findings, and that their expectations and preferences are clear. In short, many of the elements amenable to influence in a given setting lie within the administrator's domain and thus are more susceptible to his or her influence. This influence is not confined to the setting or organizational context traditionally associated with administrative responsibility. Rather, the administrator's influence cuts across all three categories: participants, setting, and conduct of the evaluation. And such influence is vital to use in cases where the evaluator lacks leadership ability, prestige, or political understanding.

Given the great need, then, for administrative leadership to promote evaluation use, we developed the Guide accordingly. After discussing in detail the factors which we have outlined in this report, the Guide presents a factor pattern for organizing evaluations and demonstrates how the pattern can be applied in a real program. The scenarios we mentioned previously then apply the factor pattern to provide the administrator with

a bridge between the research findings and their application. The Guide concludes with a series of worksheets designed to help the administrator promote the use process and monitor its progress. These worksheets also contain suggested strategies the administrator might adopt to stimulate use.

The factor pattern guiding the organizing process and some exemplary worksheets and strategies appear in Appendix A. These materials reflect the Guide's basic purpose -- to help an administrator organize an evaluation for maximum use. The demonstration project was conceived to ascertain how well the Guide met that purpose.

The Demonstration Project

As mentioned previously, we view evaluation as a means of producing information to be used in making decisions about educational programs. In this regard, the evaluation use literature shows that such use is influenced by factors reflecting the participants in the evaluation, such as the evaluator and potential users; by factors in the evaluation setting, such as requirements, organizational features, and program features; and by factors stemming from the evaluation itself, such as its procedures for collecting and communicating information. If these factors are ignored, they can reduce or even negate an evaluation's use potential. If, on the other hand, an evaluation is planned, conducted, and communicated in response to the particular factors operating in a given setting, its use potential can be greatly enhanced.

The Guide we developed, therefore, provides persuasive information

highlighting the need for someone to assume responsibility for ensuring that an evaluation is conducted in the manner suggested above. More importantly, the Guide also provides planning and implementation worksheets that the evaluation organizer can use as he or she organizes the evaluation for use. These practical materials also provide suggestions that the organizer can apply or adapt to ensure that the evaluation's intended uses are achieved.

The Guide is designed to be used by a program administrator who assumes responsibility for the evaluation's organization, primarily because a program administrator is often strategically placed to assume responsibility for promoting evaluation use. Of the forty-five or so discrete elements identified as affecting evaluation use, only about one-third of them stem from the evaluator's personal and professional approach to his or craft, while the remaining two-thirds of the identified elements reflect users' personal and professional characteristics and the organizational setting in which the evaluation is conducted. Elements in these user and setting domains are part of the administrator's sphere of influence and therefore the administrator should assume responsibility for ensuring that the evaluation deals with them in an appropriate manner.

The Guide is intended to facilitate administrator assumption of this responsibility. It exemplifies the use-influencing characteristics we felt would operate in most settings; offers strategies we hoped would minimize negative influences while strengthening positive influences on use; and provides a means of tracking progress toward the intended evaluation uses.

The demonstration project set out to determine the effectiveness of the Guide at the local program level. The project's objectives were

as follows: (1) to implement the decision maker's Guide in schools and districts conducting program evaluations; in order (2) to the assess the extent to which our use framework would bear up in real evaluation settings; (3) to validate the existence of the use-influencing factors emphasized in the Guide; and (4) to assess the extent to which the Guide's suggested strategies promote evaluation use.

Site Selection

This phase of our work, first, sought the advice of practitioners and researchers to help us locate and invite schools districts which might be willing to participate in our demonstration efforts.

With the assistance of these advisors, we located a sample of such districts and selected them to ensure that they differed in features such as size, location, population, program emphasis, and evaluation needs. This sampling pool was sufficiently large to ensure that we would attain eight to ten broadly representative program sites.

Next, we conducted exploratory telephone conversations with district administrators (usually the superintendent) to discuss the project and possible district interest in participating. Each administrator who indicated interest received a formal letter of invitation and a description of the project (see Appendix B).

From the twenty formal invitations we extended, ten broadly representative districts agreed to participate. Each of these districts designated a program administrator who would assume responsibility for organizing the evaluation for use, and each of these administrators received a copy of the Guide. Since we wanted to ascertain the effectiveness of the Guide in and of itself, future CSE support consisted

solely of the availability of telephone conversation restricted to questions of project procedures. Consultation on matters of evaluation technique or use-promoting strategies was not provided.

Two principal sources of data -- questionnaire and telephone follow up -- provided the project's data base. First, contextual information was collected via questionnaires (see Appendix C) which focused on describing the program being evaluated, the designated use organizer, the evaluator, and the intended users/uses of the evaluation.

Second, implementation information was collected via telephone. This component focused on describing the local factors that required administrator attention during the evaluation, the strategies selected from the Guide to promote use and their success in helping achieve the intended uses, and any field implementation problems encountered.

In the next section we will present the project's results in each of our demonstration sites.

Results

The Program for Gifted and Talented High School Students

This program is situated in a large district in the midwest. Its goal is to provide instructional and motivational support to assist gifted and talented sophomores to successfully compete on tests such as the Preliminary Scholastic Aptitude/National Merit Scholarship Test (PSAT/NMSQT). To meet this goal, the program provides accelerated, in-depth instruction in the areas of languge and mathematics, with emphasis on test-taking strategies and motivational techniques.

The program is funded under Chapter 2 and is required to undergo evaluation. The primary goal of the present evaluation was to determine whether the program's instructional strategies prepared students to take the PSAT/NMSQT.

The program was implemented in four high schools. Students scoring above a certain cut-off score on the district's achievement test were invited to participate in the program. Some 2,000 students elected to participate.

The director of the district's comprehensive gifted program was the evaluation use organizer for this program. The director, who has been a district administrator for 17 years, volunteered because previous overall program evaluations had not provided information useful for program monitoring and improvement.

More specifically, at the time the evaluation was being considered, the principal concern was with whether the student selection process would

attract the students who could profit most from the program and, once in the program, if the experiences it provided them were effective.

The program evaluator was a specialist who has been with the district for eight years. He had not previously worked with gifted program personnel. This evaluator was charged with the task of providing information reflecting (1) the effectiveness of the criteria set for selecting students for the program and (2) the effectiveness of the program developed for these students.

The intended users of the information addressing these questions were staff who administer the program and classroom teachers participating in the program.

The principal sources of data concerning the program consisted of standardized achievement tests, questionnaires and interviews for teachers and students, interviews with other program personnel, and classroom observation.

Factors requiring administrator attention: Three contextual features help explain the manner in which the organizer decided which factors would be an influence on the evaluation use process.

First, previous evaluations of the district's comprehensive gifted program had been conducted by independent consultants. Program staff -- both administrators and teachers -- felt that these evaluations had provided them with virtually no information to help them assess how various program segments were operating. In essence, they felt that they had been totally excluded from the evaluation process in the past.

Second, the use organizer felt that, for the evaluation to be useful, it would have to focus on the particular gifted program segment of interest

rather than provide a broad view of the entire program. In addition, the organizer was concerned that the evaluation should provide ongoing information focusing on questions and needs expressed by potential users. Based on the users' negative evaluation experiences in the past, the organizer knew that it would be difficult to keep his users interested in the evaluation, to convince them of the value of providing periodic information to the evaluator, and to believe that such information would pay off by providing information of direct use during the life of the program.

Given the above setting, the organizer decided to ask the district's research and evaluation unit to conduct a program evaluation. This decision points up the third contextual feature of interest here. The district evaluation unit had not previously worked with gifted program staff and so any evaluation specialist furnished by the distict might be viewed with some suspicion.

With these relationships in mind, the administrator decided that user interest in the evaluation and their commitment to use would bear attention. Similarly, given the need for the evaluator to be in close and frequent contact with the program, evaluator commitment to use, willingness to involve users, political sensitivity, and credibility would likely influence the use process.

In addition, because of the currently negative staff disposition to evaluation, the organizer was convinced that evaluation procedures, information dialogue, and substance of the evaluation would play an important role in the use process, and would need to reflect users' information preferences.

Use-promoting strategies: The first thing the organizer did was to discuss his evaluation needs with the head of the district's evaluation unit. The upshot of this meeting was the decision to assign one evaluator to stay with the program during its duration. The evaluator selected for this assignment was carefully chosen to match the organizer's concerns. That is, evaluation staff differed in terms of their penchant for working closely with program staff. Some staff members appeared to be more likely than others to accept the fact that evaluation procedures selected must meet users' concerns and needs just as much as they need to meet technical criteria. The evaluator finally selected for the program had previously demonstrated the ability to work closely with teachers.

Once the evaluator was selected, the use organizer arranged a series of meetings in which users expressed their concerns, questions, and information needs to the evaluator. These meetings helped allay user concerns about the value of participating in yet another evaluation. It also gave them an opportunity to raise evaluation questions and to hear that these qustions would be dealt with by the evaluation. In this way, their commitment to use began to evolve.

At the same time, during these meetings the organizer asked the evaluator to carefully consider the range of user needs, to propose to users alternate means of answering their questions, and to allow users to express their opinions as to the relevance and feasibility of various measures. In this way, the evaluator was able to demonstrate his sensitivity toward program needs and thus establish credibility by selecting appropriate measures.

During the course of the evaluation, the organizer made sure that the evaluator provided the users with ongoing formative information reflecting program operations and illuminating questions previously expressed by users. In addition, the organizer made sure that the evaluator was readily accessible to answer questions, to explain findings, to discuss their implications for program operation.

This communicaton system, consisting of both oral presentations and written interim and final reports, helped maintain user commitment and further enhanced the evaluator's credibility.

Throughout the entire process, the administrator made sure that procedures proposed by the evaluator would be accepted by the users. Frequently, the administrator advised the evaluator to "soften" his approach, to make sure that technical considerations were not seen as more important than the real-world constraints of program staff.

Throughout the entire program, the organizer monitored the evaluation communication system. He made sure that users were invited to review results, to critique draft reports, to offer their insights to the evaluator. These insights were then considered by the organizer and evaluator and were frequently added to the contents of a report.

Success in achieving the intended uses: We pointed out earlier that this evaluation had two principal audiences. These audiences consisted of program administrators and classroom teachers. The administrators were primarily concerned with whether student selection criteria were effective. The teachers were primarily concerned with the effectiveness of the program's instructional strategies. The evaluation use organizer

wanted the evaluation to provide information that both user groups could apply.

In terms of student selection criteria, the administrators discovered that students' prior achievement scores were not the best nor the only predictor of their success in the program. That is, interviews with students suggested that the strength of the decision to attend college was a likely predictor of success. Given this evaluation finding, the program administrators now make sure that candidate students, in addition to having certain achievement test scores, demonstrate in a one-on-one interview that they actually plan to attend college.

In terms of the effectiveness of the program's instructional strategies, the teachers discovered, on the basis of student inteview data, that they were taking up too much time in the presentation of test-taking strategies and that they should spend more instructional time dealing with language and mathematics. Most students suggested that while some coaching in test-taking strategies was useful, they felt that they needed greater mastery of the content of tests, such as language arts and mathematics. The program for these students has been modified accordingly.

In the particular setting, then, the strategies adopted by the organizer appear to have stimulated the intended evaluation uses.

The Emotional Adjustment Program

This program is located in a medium-sized district on the eastern seaboard. It is part of the district's overall special education program, and is focused on students identified as having emotional problems which affect their achievement in school.

Funded directly by the district, the program involves 100 students fairly evenly distributed in an elementary school, a junior high school, and a high school. Each student identified as being in need of the program's services receives psychological and educational counseling designed to facilitate achievement of the objectives and progress rates stipulated in his or her individualized education plan.

While the district's overall special education program had been evaluated in the past, this was the first time that the emotional adjustment program had been singled out for close attention. It was conducted at the request of the program coordinator, who also served as the evaluation use organizer.

The evaluation was conducted by a member of the district's student and program evaluation staff. This person has been with the district and working as an evaluator for two years.

As mentioned above, the evaluation was requested by the program coordinator. Her request for the evaluation reflected her concern that she did not have a clear picture of how the program was being implemented. That is, while the program's curriculum guide was a fairly comprehensive document, the implementation level was the individual classroon, and so the coordinator felt that future plans for the program would profit from

descriptive detail at that level.

The task requested of the evaluator, then, was to conduct an implementation evaluation of the progam. The intended primary user of the information was the program coordinator herself. She planned to use the evaluation as a baseline for future programmatic decisions.

The intended secondary users of the evaluation were to consist of other special education staff whose support might be required in the case of programmatic changes, emotional adjustment staff who might be required to alter current practices to accomodate these changes, and the board of education in matters of continued support of the program.

The principal sources of data for the evaluation consisted of student demographic data, results of teachers' observation of students' behavior, examination of individual education plans, examination of the program's curriculum guide, and evaluator-conducted interviews with participating students and staff, and with staff of other special education units.

Factors requiring adminstration attention: The kinds of evaluation of the special education program conducted in the past help explain the factors that concerned the organizer here. First, these evaluations had taken a broad focus -- the special education program rather than the discrete units comprising the program. Second, these evaluations had a marked quantitative flavor -- emphasizing the numbers of students served rather than judgments of how well the program met their needs. Third, to the extent that more qualitative appraisals were made, they stemmed primarily from examination of students' individual education plans to the virtual exclusion of other programatic features.

In this context, then, the organizer anticipated that user

characteristics would play a large role in determining the extent to which the evaluator would be able to gain access to the finely-grained information required by an implementation study. Staff had not previously been exposed to this conception of evaluation: unless they cooperated with the evaluator, the organizer would not get the information she wanted to use for future program planning; unless they accepted the validity of the evaluator's findings, they would be unwilling to use the evaluator's recommendations if they ran counter to their notions of the program.

The organizer decided, then, that user views about the program and their expectations for the evaluation would be critical. As a corollary, it seemed clear that the evaluator's political sensitivity would largely determine his credibility. Unless these factors were handled with care, the necessary commitment to use would be problematic.

The organizer was also concerned about some of the overall institutional arrangements -- such as largely autonomous classrooms and staff who contribute to the program but who are located in organizational units outside of special education.

In terms of evaluation procedures, the organizer was concerned with whether the intention to interview would be seen by staff as an appropriate method, and with their likelihood of viewing information which would aggregate across classrooms as having relevance to them as individuals.

Use promoting strategies: The evaluation organizer was concerned about the possibility of the various user groups being unwilling to participate in the evaluation and apply its findings. Before introducing the evaluator to the staff, she invited members from other special education units and staff of the emotional adjustment program to a meeting

in which the proposed evaluation was discussed.

In this meeting it was evident that most members saw evaluation more as a means of demonstrating compliance than a vehicle for characterizing program operations and identifying areas of strength and weakness. At this juncture the organizer suggested that, as it would be applied to the program, the evaluation would have an essentially descriptive function, that the intended users of its findings were program staff, and that any recommendations proposing changes to current practice would be presented for staff input before any final decisions were made.

This characterization of evaluation tempered all use-promoting tactics adopted by the organizer and/or the evaluator. For example, at the first meeting between staff and evaluator, the organizer had the evaluator amplify and illustrate the formative uses of evaluation. One of the off-shoots of this meeting was the formation of an advisory group, established by the organizer, who would consult with the evaluator as the evaluation evolved.

Working in close cooperation with the evaluator and organizer, the group helped establish feasible time lines for data collection, took responsibility for setting up schedules of meetings between evaluator and program participants, and generally worked as liaison between the evaluator and other potential users.

Success in achieving the intended uses: Earlier we mentioned that the organizer considered herself as primary evaluation user. In this regard, the evaluation was a success. For example, the evaluation discovered that there was great variation in how staff members viewed the purposes of the program and their roles and responsibilities within it. Teachers used

various means of observing and recording student behavior. They also tended to differ on the kinds of behavior they thought they were supposed to be watching for, and in how they attempted to modify student behavior.

The manner in which individual education plans were developed was also subject to variation. Some staff members tended to rely on a certain kind of information more than others, the plans' level of specificity or generality varied; means of assessing student progress varied.

In addition, the evaluation pointed out that staff of the emotional adjustment program did not know much about what their colleagues were doing. This finding held up in other areas: staff members of other special education units did not know a great deal about the functions of the adjustment unit and vice versa; staff members who had information of concern to the emotional adjustment program, but who were housed in other district units, such as pupil services, were concerned about "turf" and initially unwilling to share information without a lot of "personal coaxing" from the organizer.

While the evaluator did encounter some problems -- having to re-schedule appointments, having to accept a sample of respondents that was perhaps a little on the short side, having to give up, to ensure staff cooperation, what he saw was a technical requirement in a measure or its administration -- the process went fairly smoothly. The use organizer, as primary user, did receive a report that pointed out important features about how the program was being implemented and which contained recommendations about how the organizer, as unit coordinator, might present these findings to the other (secondary) intended users before any recommendations for change are seriously contemplated.

The Early Childhood Program

This program is located in a large district in the south-eastern United States. Serving children ranging from infancy to kindergarten, the program's principal intention is to foster positive attitudes in young children for learning. The major characteristics of the program consist of individualized instruction based on the results of diagnostic testing, small teacher-pupil ratios, and on-going staff development geared toward pupil needs.

The program has multiple funding sources and its evaluation is required by the district. The principal focus of the evaluation is to monitor program operation, to assess its strengths and weaknesses, and to offer recommendations for modifications, if necessary.

The program is conducted in approximately a dozen sites varying in the age groups of the pupils served. The supervisor of the district's early childhood activities assumed the responsibilities of evaluation organizer.

The program evaluator has been with the district for several years, and has been working as an evaluator for the last two years. She and the early childhood staff have worked together in the past.

The intended evaluation users were the principal and teachers at each site. The primary sources of data on the program were the results of diagnostic testing, evaluator observation of classroom operations, and interviews with program staff.

Factors requiring administrator attention: In an early, pre-planning meeting between organizer and evaluator, a careful review of the factors that might affect the evaluation led to the decision to concentrate

primarily, though not exclusively, on the evaluation's procedures.

Since the evaluator and staff had previously worked together, the organizer felt that the usual factors of concern stemmming from evaluator characteristics would not be an issue of concern.

Similarly, given the relative freedom from bureaucratic constraints, the organizer felt that organizational features were not likely to become a concern. On the other hand, given the innovative nature of the program, program characteristics might require the organizer's attention, as might such user characteristics as professional style and information preference.

With factors reflecting the participants and the setting focused as outlined above, the organizer (and the evaluator) were therefore in the position to devote a great deal of their time and energy on factors reflecting the conduct of the evaluation. Given the principal's and teachers' (the ultimate users) heavy involvement in and professional commitment to the program, the organizer was convinced that constant dialogue, in a variety of forms, would be the most important contribution to the use process. Further, such dialogue would begin before the evaluation began, continue during its execution, and play a large role in matters of reporting. In this way, one particular factor -- dialogue -- would be used to make determinations abut evaluation procedures, substance of its information, and how that information would be reported.

Use-promoting strategies: As mentioned previously, on-going staff inservice is a large component in the program. In that program teachers and their principals were already accustomed to frequent sessions in which most program staff were present (sometimes with participation cutting across all sites and sometimes confined to one site), the organizer

inserted "evaluation" as a topic in most, if not all, staff inservice sessions. In this way, participant involvement in the evaluation became a natural part of their professional responsibility and development. As the organizer put it, staff (users) were involved in "preparing for the evaluation, doing the evaluation, monitoring the evaluation, and how it would be used."

The organizer described this use-enhancing process as follows:

The organizer and evaluator prepared a draft proposal describing how the evaluation might be conducted. Users' review and critique of this draft allowed them to insert questions of interest to them that the evaluation should address, as well as to make suggestions about how these questions might best be assessed.

Using the above kinds of feedback, the organizer and evaluator modified the proposal, built in users questions, and developed an overall evaluation plan -- questions to be addressed, the measures to be used, data collection methods and timelines, reporting schedules and manner of reporting.

User review of the plan led to some refinement and the evaluation got underway.

As data began to be collected, and with the time schedule as a referent, organizer and evaluator sought input from the users as to reporting formats, presentation of data, and time(s) at which information would be needed to allow users to respond to recommendations.

In this way, a natural and on-going two-way dialogue guided the evaluation from its inception, through its progress reports, which at minimum were presented and critiqued during staff inservice sessions, all

the way to the final report.

Success in achieving the intended uses: In terms of its intended uses, this evaluation was extremely successful. Curriculum areas in need of improvement were identified; principals and teachers responded favorably to the findings and changes to the curriculum have been made.

The diagnostic testing component -- a critical feature of the program -- was found to stand in need of improvement, in terms both of content and administration. This program componenent was overhauled and staff have received inservice focusing on the use of the new measures.

In this setting, it appears that the pre-established credibility of the evaluator, the autonomy of program staff in terms of planning and directing their own evaluation, and evaluator receptivity to ongoing intimacy with program staff, freed up all parties to concentrate almost exclusively on factors reflecting the conduct of the evaluation. This freedom led to a highly used evaluation.

The In-School Suspension Learning Program

This program is located in a large, midwestern school district. It is one of several, coordinated district-wide activities intended to help reduce the drop-out rate of high school students. A perceived need both to improve and increase student attendance and to enforce the district's discipline code led to the conception of in-school suspension learning centers.

The program is designed to provide counseling and tutorial services for high school students who would otherwise be suspended from school. The learning center is a separate classroom where students meet with teachers and other school personnel to explore and determine remediation activities for misconduct. For students spending two or more periods in the center, the program provides opportunities to work on assigned activities related to their regular classroom instruction. Students may remain in the center for the duration of their suspension. A teacher specialist and a school aide coordinate the center's activities and direct individual learning activities for the students.

Students participating in the suspension program are selected and assigned by the local school principal or his designee who also determines the extent of the services for each student.

The program is funded under Chapter 1 and is required to undergo evaluation. The major goal of the evaluation was to determine the extent to which the program helped alleviate the problem of students dropping out of school because of behavior problems. In this regard, evaluation data were intended to help make decisions concerning program improvement.

As mentioned above, this program is one of several intended to reduce the student drop out rate. The executive director of this larger effort volunteered to be the use-organizer for the in-school learning centers evaluation. His principal concern as organizer was to ensure that the evaluation would be used by program planners, administrators, and instructional staff to respond to program strengths and weaknesses identified during the evaluation.

The program evaluator was a district specialist who has been with the district for 16 years, the last two of which as an evaluator. She had not previously worked with staff of the learning centers.

The primary sources of data on the program consisted of monthly reports of student participation, on-site observations of learning centers, observation of staff development meetings, and questionnaires for staff and students.

Factors requiring administrator attention: The factors which emerged as requiring administrator attention stemmed from four principal sources. First, the project was newly adopted and undergoing its first year of implementation. Second, the program operators had designed and implemented the program which they were now conducting. Third, most of the teachers involved in the program viewed evaluation as something required, something done to demonstrate compliance rather than to provide information to be used in program monitoring and refinement. Fourth, the program staff and evaluator were working together for the first time.

Given these contextual considerations, the use organizer had several major concerns. For example, he was concerned that the introduction of an unknown evaluator, coupled with the negative disposition some staff felt

toward evaluation in general, would reduce or negate the evaluation's use potential. Further, while a few staff members seemed to have a more positive perception of evaluation, they still felt that the program was not ready for evaluation given its recent adoption. Finally, since the staff operating the program had been intimately involved in its conception, planning, and development, the organizer was concerned that they might not welcome findings running counter to their judgment of the program.

With this background in mind, the organizer felt he would have to pay particularly close attention, first of all, to the evaluator's credibility. At the same time, he was concerned that introduction of the evaluator and establishing her credibility should also attempt to generate credibility for evaluation itself; that is, elements influencing user interest in the evaluation, such as their views of the project, their expectations for and predisposition toward evaluation, and their needs and perceived risks seemed to have a high potential for hampering the evaluation's use.

Since the organizer perceived no organizational constraints on his freedom to direct the course of the evaluation, his final concern was that the procedures of the evaluation should assume a formative posture, with on-going dialogue and frequent sharing of information.

Use-promoting strategies: In his first meeting with the evaluator, the organizer discussed with her the above kinds of issues. They both agreed that meaningful staff involvement in planning and conducting the evaluation would likely pay off in terms of promoting possible information use.

At the first of several meetings involving staff and evaluators, the

organizer highlighted the evaluator's background as a teacher and project coordinator before moving into evaluation. At this meeting the organizer had the evaluator point out the purposes of formative evaluation and discuss how it can address staff-generated questions.

The organizer next set up a series of meetings in which staff proposed questions for the evaluation and in which evaluator and staff jointly planned and developed measures for these questions.

In addition to establishing a time frame to guide the evaluator's reporting to the staff, the organizer also had her attend regularly scheduled staff inservice sessions. The major function of these sessions was for the evaluator to elaborate her evolving perception of how the program was proceeding, to point out areas seemingly in need of refinement, and to receive staff feedback as to the accuracy of her perceptions and the relevance and feasibility of her recommendations.

Over time, staff came to accept the value of the information they were receiving: that is, they began to see that evaluation need be neither "window dressing" nor "hatchet grinding;" they began to look forward to periodic reports -- verbal and written -- and the opportunity to respond to the organizer's invitation to critique and even suggest modifications to these "drafts." In large measure, the final report had been negotiated throughout the entire course of the evaluation.

Success in achieving the intended uses: The evaluation seems to have a strong potential for helping improve student attendance and discipline. For example, the evaluator's formative reporting helped identify areas in which staff needed inservice. It also suggested that the learning centers need to enlist community support of the program. Had the staff not been so

intimately involved in the evaluation it is unlikely that they would have entertained such recommendations.

The organizer has reported these kinds of findings to his superiors. He feels that if staff continue to help identify the skills they need in order to work with this particular student population, and if the community demonstrates their support of the program to their children, the program has a good chance of being successful.

The Bilingual Program

This program, situated in a small district in the south, is geared toward the needs of limited English-proficient (LEP) students. The program, which emphasizes language arts, reading, and math skills development, is essentially a transitional program. That is, the program allows students to adjust to school and/or master subject matter until skill in English is developed to the point that it alone can be used as the medium of instruction.

The program is funded under Title VII and operates in three of the district's five elementary schools. Each of these schools has an enrollment of approximately five hundred students. In each school, the bilingual program serves about 200 students in grades K-4. The vast majority of these students are Hispanic.

In each of the schools with a bilingual program, the principal goal is to help students attain sufficient competency in English to ensure proficiency in all areas of academic concern. The program evaluation is a federal requirement.

The district does not have a bilingual department as such. The bilingual program, and other programs receiving federal funds, is under the nominal control of the assistant superintendent. In the past, this administrator was given the responsibility for "evaluating" the bilingual program. This evaluation had consisted essentially of administering a standardized test to students in the program and comparing their scores with normative data accompanying the test.

While these test data, considered alone, suggested that the program

was doing fairly well, 5th and 6th grade teachers at each elementary school complained that not all students were equally prepared to receive instruction in English. This problem had been growing during the program's three years of operation.

The assistant superintendent, concerned with this problem, asked for and received permission from the superintendent to hire an independent consultant to conduct a careful evaluation of the program. The consultant chosen was a faculty member at a neighboring university.

Assuming the role of the evaluation use organizer, the assistant superintendent asked the consultant to conduct an evaluation that would help illuminate the problem of variable student preparation to receive English-language instruction in the upper elementary grades. The organizer intended to use the evaluator's report to make recommendations concerning future program operations.

Given the need to report findings to the federal government, the organizer felt that the standardized test in use should continue to be a part of the evaluation. The evaluator agreed, but stressed the need to apply other measures, such as student performance on tests of entering language ability, observations of classroom operation, and interviews with students, teachers, and principals. The organizer believed that this kind of data would help answer his questions, but was concerned about how staff might respond.

Factors requiring administration attention: Since the program had not been subjected to this kind of evaluation scrutiny in the past, the organizer was extremely concerned about the evaluator's credibility. In addition, he was concerned that the evaluator would need to generate

rapport with staff in order to enlist their support of the evaluation. The extent to which the evaluator might positively involve staff in the evaluation might be a principal key to success.

At the same time, the organizer was concerned about staff member's professional experience, their predisposition to evaluation, and the kinds of risks they might associate with the evaluation. Should these factors take a negative turn, staff commitment to use the evaluation -- particularly in the case of recommendations for change in current practice -- might be difficult to achieve.

In addition, given the relative automony of schools and classrooms, the organizer was concerned that the evaluator might have difficulty gaining access to the information he would need. Similarly, he had some misgivings about using observation and interview methods, and how the evaluator would present findings.

Use-promoting strategies: The first step the organizer took was to provide the evaluator with a sense of how staff might feel about the new approach to evaluation. Some staff had several years of teaching experience; others were quite new to the district and might feel threatened by the evaluation; none had ever had a very intimate contact with evaluation and might not see how its findings could be of relevance to them as teachers.

During this conversation, the organizer asked the evaluator if it would be possible for the evaluation to contain two distinct strands: one strand would consist primarily of reporting the results of standardized testing, as well as the broad findings from other measures, to the funding agency; the other would consist of a separate, highly-focused report(s) to

the organizer and the individual schools offering reasons for why some students seemed to be less prepared for English-language instruction than others. The evaluator accepted this assignment.

Having defined roles and established possible trouble points among staff, the organizer set up a meeting in which the evaluator discussed the approach to evaluation outlined above, pointing out that one evaluation concern would be to take a close look at how the program appeared to be operating in each school, while the other would be to assess how the district, as a whole, was serving the LEP students in the program.

At this meeting, staff discussed their concerns about whether such an approach to evaluation would take up a lot of their time -- i.e., being observed, answering questions in an interview, and so forth. The organizer promised the staff that he would keep demands on staff time as minimal as possible.

After this meeting, the organizer, with input from the evaluator, then prepared an over-all data collection plan: the issues the evaluator would concern himself with while observing classes; the kinds of questions to be probed during interviews; the time-line for visiting schools and classes.

Once this draft plan was proposed, the organizer arranged a meeting with each of the three schools. At each school, organizer and evaluator presented the plan outlined above, took questions from staff, and agreed to some modifications in timing to make data collection more convenient. The principal and some teachers at each school asked if they could see reports before "they were sent to the Feds". The organizer (and evaluator) agreed.

Success in achieving intended uses: The organizer ultimately received an evaluation report that shed a great deal of light on his question about

student ability to achieve in all-English-language instructon. However, the evaluator had to spend much more time than anticipated to collect the data: teachers asked for postponements for interviews they were scheduled for; students who were to be interviewed could not be removed from the classroom on the appointed day; information on students' entering language ability was hard to find; repeated evaluator visits were necessary.

Eventually, however, the evaluator was able to prepare a report containing findings that illuminated the central question. He found, for example, that individual teachers varied greatly in the extent to which they used diognostic tests of entering language ability to guide instruction; they varied quite a bit in how they "practiced" with their students in preparation for upcoming tests; there was a great deal of variation in how they presented instruction and in how they attempted to introduce English as the primary language of instruction; exit criteria were poorly defined.

These findings suggested to the organizer that the differing levels of student readiness to receive instruction in English, then, were primarily an off-shoot of classroom operation and not a reflection of any inherent weakness in how the district planned for students to progress.

However, the findings did convey a sense that the program was being poorly managed at the district and school levels, and that such management might be an outgrowth of differing perceptions of bilingual education and what it is supposed to accomplish. In this final regard, the evaluation was extremely effective in that it is presently being used by district and school personnel to discuss issues of bilingual education intentions and practices, the extent to which there is, or needs to be, consensus on these

issues, and how answers to these questions might shape future bilingual education practice in the district.

Implementation Issues

It seems reasonable to conclude that the evaluation-user Guide was applied successfully at each of the five sites described above, and that it led to evaluations that were put to their intended uses. It seems equally clear that, as we expected, such success demands the presence of an administrator who takes an active role in the promotion of evaluation use, coupled with an evaluator who welcomes, or at least accepts, this kind of administrative oversight.

The negative experiences in our five other sites bear out the truth of the above observations. In each of these sites the Guide was not put to its intended uses. In two of these sites, budgetary reductions announced mid-way in the school year demanded an immediate district response. In each site the person responsible for dealing with the budget crisis was also the evaluation use organizer. When these individuals removed themselves from active supervision of the evaluation, the matter of use essentially became a matter of complying, with as minimal an effort as possible, with the bare-bones of the evaluation's requirements.

The evaluators in these sites, however, cannot be faulted. In each case, funds thought to be available for the evaluation were cut drastically and, in addition, staff thought to be available to help generate and ultimately put to use evaluation information were shunted off in other directions in response to the matter of the budget.

In two other sites, essentially the same problem arose, although for different reasons. In these two sites, the designated evaluation organizer left his or her district to assume another position. In each case, the

shoes of the departing organizer were never filled and in each case the evaluator was instructed to "get back to business as usual".

In the final site, political problems interfered with the Guide's application. Here the organizer asked for, and received, CSE permission to use the guide to organize a teacher-evaluation system. Teacher-union opposition to the proposed system precluded the Guide's ever being put to use.

Synthesis and Implictions

In those sites where a local administrator assumed responsibility for organizing an evaluation for use, and applied the kinds of tactics to the core group of factors we suggest in the Guide as being critical, the evaluation information was put to its intended uses.

Some of our demonstration sites encountered unexpected occurrences leading to the evaluation organizer being removed, part-way through the use process, from the evaluation. In these sites the evaluations were not put the their intended uses.

It seems possible, then, that the influence of the organizer on the use process is even more important than we conceived it to be. In addition, the possibility of the loss of the use-organizer is always present. Perhaps we need to add another element to the use process, one that beefs up the role of the evaluator. That is, the organizer should probably try to draw up an over-all use plan, with relevant factors and their associated use strategies spelled out, in extremely close cooperation with the evaluator. Together, they should try to anticipate the effect on the use process of the organizer's removal from the setting, brain-storm factors not anticipated which may stem from this removal, and plan strategies the evaluator might apply to offset the negative effect. The evaluator, in essence, should be prepared to assume the role of the use organizer.

The elements we lay out in the Guide's core factors pattern clearly provide the organizer with an effective vantage point from which to begin the use process. Further, in each of our sites, common factors emerged

which suggest the extent to which the factor pattern, as a total entity, is likely to apply in most settings. For example, most of the participant factors, evaluator and user, seem to have a strong chance of affecting use in most settings. Many of the evaluation-conduct factors, similarly, would seem to be likely candidates to crop up in most settings.

However, the extent to which these factors emerge and the strength of their influence on use may be much more situation specific than we anticipated. That is, none of our successful demonstration site organizers either expected, or found it necessary, to plan for and exert influence upon all of the participant and evaluation factors in the Guide's core pattern.

Perhaps we should suggest more strongly, then, that the local organizer needs to spend more time characterizing the dynamics of his or her own evaluation context than we initially thought. Preparing this kind of analysis might help focus the evaluation more closely on local issues and minimize the possibility of time being spent on non-relevant factors.

With respect to factor relevance, further, it seems possible that we may need to take a closer look at some of the factors we place in the setting of the evaluation. For example, in most of our sites there was little perceived need to anticipate or react to many setting factors, whether of preexisting bounds, organization features, or the project itself. We had more or less expected this phenomenon, and so the factor pattern and the guide do not place a great deal of emphasis on such factors.

On the other hand, some institutional features of the setting, but highly dependent on the particular setting, once again, may have the potential to play a stronger role in the use process then we had thought.

For example, in one of our cases, the business of "turf and territory" had a strong role in the use process, possibly suggesting that institutional arrangements may need further consideration. Similarly, while we recognize the influence of fiscal constraints on use, we had not anticipated that, by itself, this factor would be likely to have a great effect on use. Depending on the particular setting, as we saw in two of our unsuccessful sites, this factor may have an important role to play.

Across each of our successful sites, evaluator accommodation to program needs is a constant theme. Organizers were careful to ensure that the overall evaluation plan and its specific measures paid just as much attention to the constraints of the setting as they did to methodological elegance and technical considerations. In each case, the evaluator was willing to achieve this balance and in each case it made an important contribution to use. Had the evaluator tried to make the program conform to strict notions of design and measurement it is likely that the evaluation's use potential would have diminished.

While the Guide pays attention to this issue, perhaps we should more strongly emphasize to organizers and evaluators that "personal" considerations play a much greater role in the use process than "technical" considerations.

To conclude then, it appears that the Guide, its core factor pattern, and its suggested strategies can be used to bring about evaluation use. The principal advice we would offer are for the organizer to closely tailor the core factor pattern to the "cut" of his or her own context, to prepare the evaluator for the possibility of assuming the organizing role, and to reiterate to each the importance of personal demeanor in the promotion of evaluation use.

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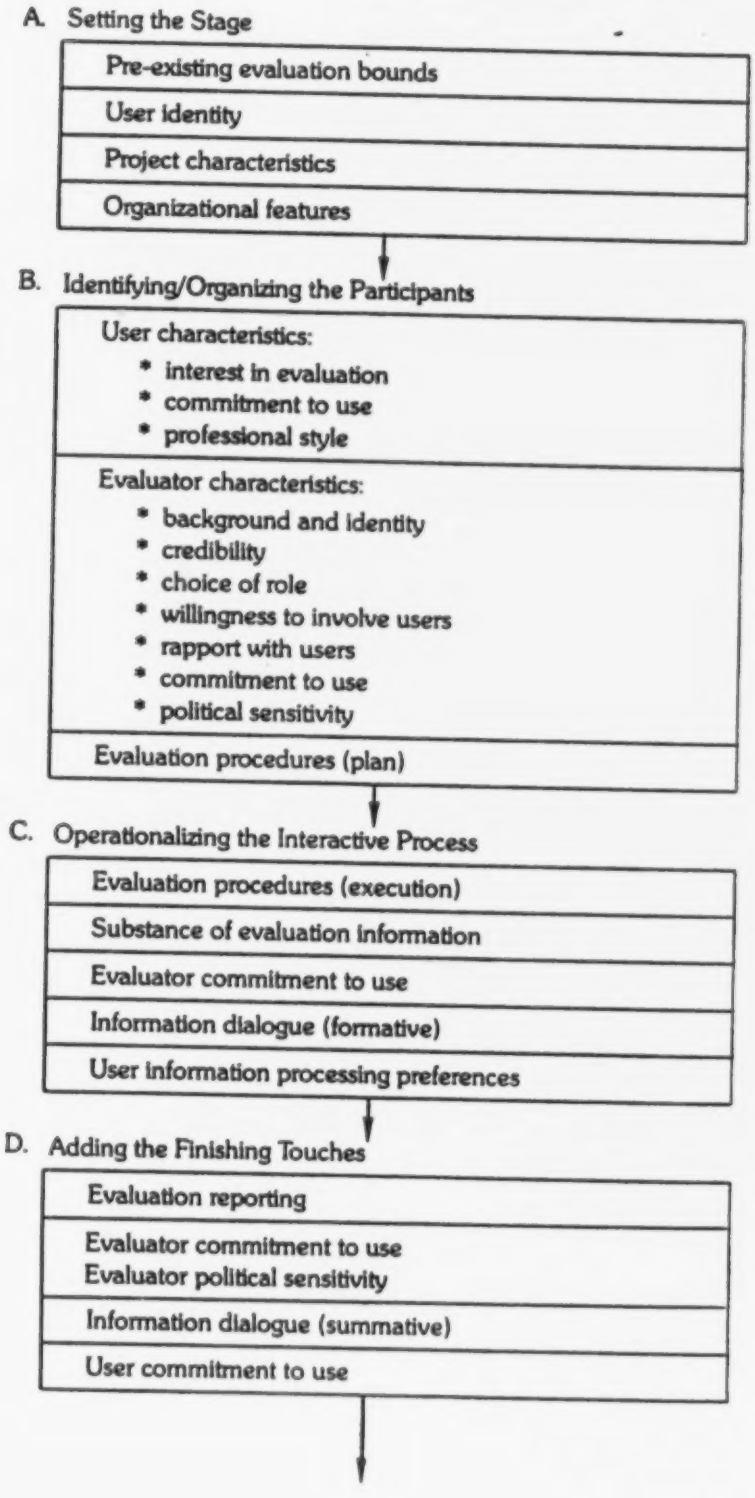
APPENDIX A

Factor Pattern, Worksheets, and Organizing Strategies from the Guide

Figure 2

Factor Pattern for Evaluation Use



Organizing for Evaluation Use

Worksheet A: Setting the Stage

Evaluation Topic:

Cluster A:

- Pre-existing evaluation bounds
- User identity
- Project characteristics
- Organizational features

→ → → → → → → →

With respect to my own program and the above topic, I need to keep the following in mind:

Factor/Element Affecting Use:	Relevant Information:	Things I Can Do To Influence Use:
A-1. Pre-existing evaluation bounds (written requirements; other contractual obligations; fiscal constraints)	1.	1.
	2.	2.
	3.	3.
	4.	4.
	5.	5.

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Figure 4

Organizing for Evaluation Use

Worksheet A: Setting the Stage

Evaluation Topic: Should SABER be continued as a district-funded activity?

Cluster A:

- Pre-existing evaluation bounds
- User identity
- Project characteristics
- Organizational features

With respect to my own program and the above topic, I need to keep the following in mind:

Factor/Element Affecting Use:	Relevant Information:	Things I Can Do To Influence Use:
A-1. Pre-existing evaluation bounds (written requirements; other contractual obligations; fiscal constraints)	1. Federal funding will cease at the end of the current school year; the Board must make a decision in the Spring whether to continue the program. 2. Federal requirements mandate the use of norm-referenced achievement tests. 3. In addition to achievement data, the Board will need the following types of information to inform its decision: student enrollment data; staffing needs and responsibilities; cost data; previous evaluation reports. 4. Ten percent of the SABER budget is allocated for evaluation activities. 5. Both the Board and the federal funding agency want more explanation of the discrepancies in the first two years' testing results.	1. Plan a timeline for all evaluation activities so that the required information will be available to the School Board when needed. Clarify the feasibility of this timeline with the evaluator. 2. Review test administration and student preparation for test-taking with appropriate staff members. 3. Make sure all data areas are covered in the current evaluation plan. Review past data applicability to current Board information needs; have the evaluator reconstruct any missing data pieces. 4. Make sure enough testing supplies are on hand; investigate less costly scoring services. 5. Confer with the evaluator to identify any possible inconsistencies in test administration and/or analyses in the first two years that may explain discrepancies in results. In addition to examining these procedural factors, apprise the evaluator of the need to identify any programmatic variables that may be responsible for the observed discrepancies.

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APPENDIX B

Letter of Invitation
and Project Description

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, LOS ANGELES UCLA

BERKELEY · DAVIS · IRVINE · LOS ANGELES · RIVERSIDE · SAN DIEGO · SAN FRANCISCO SANTA BARBARA · SANTA CRUZ

CENTER FOR THE STUDY OF EVALUATION
UCLA GRADUATE SCHOOL OF EDUCATION
LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA 90024

Dear :

Thank you for your interest in participating in CSE's project on administrative organizing for evaluation use. As I mentioned on the phone, all of the research on evaluation use agrees that in order to build locally relevant uses into a program's evaluation, a local administrator (e.g., a project director) needs to decide what these uses should be and organize the evaluation around them.

I've enclosed a CSE report describing our research on evaluation use, the factors known to affect use, and the process of organizing for use. The report introduces the product -- Organizing for Evaluation Use: A Handbook for Administrators -- that your designated administrator-organizer will receive from us and follow as he or she works with the program evaluator to plan for and follow up on uses for the evaluation.

I've also included an outline describing our project's overall structure and the role of the schools or districts working with us. CSE's role is not to influence how you evaluate your programs but rather to help ensure that these evaluations have a high use potential. To help with this, in addition to the Handbook, CSE staff will be available for telephone consultation.

We will ask participating schools and districts to help us document the use process. This will primarily consist of filling out an occasional (short) questionnaire and some telephone follow up, and asking your administrator-organizer to maintain a record of correspondence, meetings, and so forth, between him/herself and the evaluator. This documentation will also provide some information about the project director and the evaluator, and describe the project being evaluated and its overall context.

Please let me know as soon as possible if you and your district will work with us in this project, so I can send you the Handbook in time for your administrator-organizer to become familiar with its content before the school year begins.

Again, thank you for your interest. I hope we can work together in this project and jointly offer an important contribution to improved evaluation practice.

Cordially,

James Burry
Senior Research Associate

JB:klf
Encl.

ORGANIZING FOR EVALUATION USE

CSE has been conducting research on evaluation use for the past several years. This NIE-funded work has uncovered a variety of factors that affect the degree to which program evaluations and the information they provide are used for local program needs.

One of the central findings pinpoints the need for a local administrator (e.g., a superintendent; a program director) to share with the evaluator the responsibility for planning locally-important uses for the evaluation, and for organizing the evaluation in ways that help ensure that these planned uses have a strong chance of taking place. Without this local leadership, it is extremely difficult, and often impossible, to make local use happen.

To meet that administrative-evaluative need, CSE has developed a product called Organizing for Evaluation Use: A Handbook for Administrators. This handbook summarizes the relevant evaluation-use research findings; describes the factors found to have an effect on evaluation use; exemplifies these factors at work in a variety of educational settings; and shows how an administrator might influence the factors to help promote evaluation uses.

With these examples as a constant referent, the local administrator using the Handbook decides on the uses/users for the evaluation, decides which of the factors are likely to have an influence on use in his/her setting, and then follows a series of step-by-step procedures, with planning and worksheets for each, to make sure that these factors have a strong chance of working for the intended uses. These organizing procedures begin while the evaluation is being planned and continue throughout the program's evaluation.

NIE has asked CSE to implement the Handbook in districts throughout the U.S. to demonstrate this evaluation-use process. We are selecting districts which:

- are doing a program evaluation, 1984-1985; and
- will designate a local administrator to be responsible for working with the evaluator to organize the evaluation for use around locally-relevant needs such as program planning and improvement; curriculum evaluation; staff development; etc.

We are selecting districts that vary in size and geographic location; we are selecting some sites whose evaluator is a regular district/school employee and others whose evaluator is hired externally; we are interested in having the Handbook used in both externally and locally-funded programs.

For each school or district participating, CSE supplies the Handbook and makes staff available for telephone consultation.

Each participating school or district will be asked to supply CSE with information (via short questionnaires; telephone follow-up) to help us document the use process at each site.

Project period is from September 1984 to August 1985.

James Burry, Senior Research Associate
(213) 206-1508

APPENDIX C

Questionnaires for Evaluation
Organizer and Evaluator

INTERVIEW: EVALUATION USE ORGANIZER

A. Personal Information

Let me begin by getting some background information on your role in the district.

1. First, what is your title? _____

2. In that position, what are your general responsibilities?

_____

_____

_____

3. How long have you been in this position in the district? _____

4. And were you in any other positions in this district, administrative or other, before this assignment? _____

If yes, what were they? _____

_____

5. Have you held positions in any other schools or districts before this one? _____

If yes, what were they? _____

_____

6. In all, then you've been in education for how many years? _____

And of that time, you've been an administrator for how long? _____

7. Now, in terms of this specific project, did you make the decision yourself to be the evaluation use organizer? _____

a. If yes, why? _____

b. If no, can you give me an idea of how and why you were designated as organizer? _____

B. Project Information

Now I'd like to cover a few things about the project being evaluated.

1. First, does the project have a name? _____

2. And what is its main funding source? _____

3. Can you give me an idea of the total funding level? _____

4. And how much of that is earmarked for the evaluation? _____

5. Can you give me a picture of what the project is trying to accomplish? For example:

   a. Who are the principal project participants, such as students, staff, other?

   _____

   _____

   b. For each participant group, can you briefly describe their composition, such as grade level(s), language minority students, AFDC students, payed teacher aides, and so forth.

   _____

   _____

   _____

   c. For each participant group, what are the project's major goals?

   _____

   _____

   _____

   d. And with respect specifically to the students participating, the major content area(s) and goals are:

   _____

   _____

   _____

6. Finally, here, can you let me have any material that describes the project? _____

C. Context Information

Let me switch topics now to the broad administrative and organizational setting of the project.

1. First, I'd like to get a sense of how the project fits in with other district efforts.

   a. For example, is the project a part of a larger programmatic effort? _____

   b. If yes, can you describe that for me? _____

   _____

2. Can you give me an idea of the reason(s) for why the project is being evaluated?

   _____

   _____

3. And what was the reasoning behind choosing this particular project to organize its evaluation for use?

   _____

   _____

4. Finally, as the evaluation use organizer, what kind of authority do you have in trying to set the focus of the evaluation: for example, in trying to have it address project/district/school needs as well as other evaluation requirements?

   _____

   _____

   _____

D. Evaluation Procedures

Let me move now to a few questions about how the project is being evaluated.

1. Can you tell me a little about the evaluation procedures?

   a. For example, what measures are being used?

   _____

   b. For whom? _____

   c. And how often will each be administered? _____

   _____

2. Next, who will actually administer these measures?

   _____

   _____

   _____

3. And who are the people who will get the results of these measures?

   _____

   _____

   _____

4. Can you think of anything else interesting about the evaluation, such as the model or philosophy it follows?

   _____

   _____

5. Do you have any material you can share with me that describes the evaluation's requirements, purposes, and so forth? _____

E. Evaluation Purposes

Let me close now with a question or two about how you see the purposes of the evaluation.

1. First, what are your thoughts about what the evaluation should try to accomplish? _____

_____

_____

2. Next, when you think about the kinds of information the evaluation should provide, what's your sense of the people who could use that information, and how? _____

_____

_____

3. And lastly, what are your thoughts about what you might need to do to get that evaluation use(s) to happen? _____

_____

_____

INTERVIEW: PROJECT EVALUATOR

A. Personal Information

Let me begin by getting some background information on your role in the project.

1. First, what is your title? _____

2. And are you a regular district employee, or were you brought in as a consultant to be the project evaluator? _____

3. I'd like to get an idea now of your background in education.

   a. First, how long have you worked in education? _____

   b. And in what capacity? _____

   c. And how long have you worked as an evaluator? _____

   d. Now, how did you come to be an evaluator? That is, can you give me an idea of your background in evaluation?

_____

_____

_____

4. And how did you come to be the evaluator for this particular project? For example, were you assigned by the district? By the company you work for? Other?

_____

5. Finally, is this the first time you've worked with the people in the project, or have you worked with them before? _____

   a. If yes, in what capacity? _____

_____

B. Project Information

Let me switch now to one or two broad questions about the project.

1. For example, can you give me an idea of what the project is trying to accomplish, and for whom? _____

_____

2. Now, is there anything about the project itself, such as the participants, project goals, and so forth, that presents any problems for you as the evaluator? _____

   a. If yes, can you describe them for me? _____

   _____

   b. How do you think you might be able to overcome them? _____

   _____

   _____

3. In terms of the project's evaluation needs, such as external requirements, local evaluation questions, do you have any problems in trying to meet them? _____

   a. If yes, can you give me an idea of what they are?

   _____

   _____

   b. And how you think you might be able to deal with them?

   _____

   _____

4. Following up on the issues you've described to me, is there anything in the project's context or setting, such as administrative or organizational issues, that presents you with problems as evaluator? _____

   a. If yes, can you describe them for me? _____

   _____

   b. And how do you think you might be able to overcome them?

   _____

   _____

C. Evaluation Procedures

Let me move on, now, to a question or two about how you're conducting the evaluation.

1. First, are you following any particular model or evaluation approach? _____

   a. If yes, can you describe it for me? _____

   _____

2. Next, can you give me a general picture of your evaluation procedures, such as measures you're using, with whom, and how often?

   _____

   _____

   _____

3. And finally, can you give me an outline of what you see the evaluation accomplishing, and for whom?

   _____

   _____

   _____